

February 19, 2013

Dear Public Health Committee Chairs and Members:

I am submitting written testimony today regarding HB 5299 *AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION FOR THE USE OF ANTIEPILEPTIC MEDICATIONS IN SCHOOL SETTINGS*. As a registered nurse, former school nurse and now a professor of nursing, I urge you to **reject** the proposed language in this bill. Asking unlicensed personnel to administer rectal medications to students can greatly jeopardize the safety of children and require unprepared non-nursing school staff to deliver nursing care to a vulnerable population. **Even if trained, do you really think it is safe for unlicensed personnel administering rectal medication to students?**

As a nurse I understand the need to provide students that have seizures with anti-seizure medication quickly; however, it is unsafe for unlicensed personnel (i.e., non-nurses) to determine when the medication is indicated, to administer medication rectally to any student in schools, and to monitor the student for unwanted side effects, such as difficulty breathing. This care should only be provided by a qualified school nurse.

To better serve the children with seizure disorders, the public health committee should recommend safe staffing levels for school nurses so that all children in our state have a school nurse available to them every day while they are at school. **Are you aware that our current state law only requires one school nurse per district?** The public health committee and the general legislature would better serve children with seizure disorders and all other children with chronic illnesses by recommending and holding school districts accountable for safe staffing levels. These recommendations should also include plans for nursing coverage when the school nurse is absent.

In addition to serving children with chronic health care needs, school nurses also address the mental health needs of students. Ensuring that school districts have proper nursing services in place may be a low cost solution for the growing mental health concerns that face our children as well as the chronic health care needs. Currently there are approximately 1200 school nurses in our state covering approximately 1500 schools. Ensuring that there is at least one school nurse per building and more than one nurse in larger school buildings (i.e., schools with more than 600 students) would go a long way in meeting two unmet needs in our state.

**I urge you to not support this bill as written.** School nurses are the primary safety net for the health needs of students. Do not put this into the hands of unlicensed personnel! Instead consider ways to meet the needs of students by increasing school nursing services in our state. I have included my contact information below and would be happy to work with you to provide substitute language as needed.

Sincerely,



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